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### Ducks ...

(continued from front page)

Laguna Preserve's mission of providing habitat for native wildlife, said Webster.

Most of the non-native domestic ducks have been placed in the Laguna preserve by city public works crews trying relieve duck overcrowding at other city parks, said Webster.

The historic practice of relocating ducks from other city parks to the Laguna has stopped since the Laguna Wetlands Preserve was established two years ago, said Webster.

Some ducks may also have been dropped off by people getting rid of pets, said Webster.

Sebastopol animal rights advocate Paul Toussaint, a daily visitor to the Laguna preserve, says the domestic ducks are not a problem and should be left alone.

"I see no need" to use city resources to trap the ducks and evict them, said Toussaint.

"There's no crunch" of duck overcrowding in the city's 80-acre laguna preserve that includes three ponds where dozens of bird species congregate.

"I think we can live in harmony with the ducks, wild or domestic," said Toussaint.

Other non-native Laguna uses, including human activities such as hiking the preserve trails, are more intrusive on wildlife habitat, said Toussaint.

Dog owners ignored leash requirements and walked their pets off-leash in the preserve and a city worker doing maintenance drove along a path in an electric cart last week as the ducks quietly swam, unaware of their impending eviction.

Webster and Laguna de Santa Rosa Foundation board member Bob Evans improvised the duck trap made of construction netting this week to complete the duck capture.

Webster credited Evans, who's in charge of the Laguna Wetlands Preserve docents program, with being the main advocate for removing the domestic ducks.

"There are a number of reasons, number one the entire program was founded toward a nature preserve. That's our goal," said Evans, referring to the nearly 20-year effort to establish a Laguna de Santa Rosa nature preserve.

Since the city's 80-acre pre-

serve was dedicated two years ago, volunteers have planted hundreds of native trees, shrubs and grasses to "encourage native fauna to relocate," said Evans.

"Feral ducks preempt nesting areas and loafing areas and serve more often than wild ducks as vectors for disease," said Evans.

The feral ducks pose a "potential for disease that can be critically damaging to native ducks, especially those migrating in and out" of the Laguna during native bird migration cycles, said Evans.

"This is not a farm experience we're trying to create for the community," said Evans.

The evicted and relocated ducks will be placed in new homes where "they'll live to a nice old age," said Evans.

Evans said the relocation of the ducks is in the best interests of the longterm plan for establishing the Laguna Preserve as urban wildlife habitat.

Among the ducks now in the Laguna, there is one pair of mallards that are wild, said Evans.

"The transition is always tough" when trying to create a nature preserve in an urban area, said Evans. "We need support."



FRANK ROBERTSON  
DUCK RUN — Paul Toussaint shows a visitor the duck corral in the Laguna de Santa Rosa Wetlands Preserve.